

Thomas Jefferson to Edmond Charles Genet, August 7, 1793, with Endorsement from Washington , from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO THE FRENCH MINISTER¹ J. MSS. (EDMOND CHARLES GENET)

¹ In relation to this letter, Jefferson wrote the President:

[Aug. 18. 1793.]

“Th: Jefferson on examination of the subject *finds* that the resolution for restoring or compensating prizes taken by the proscribed vessels was agreed to by the heads of departmt. & Atty Genl. on the 5th. There was a difference of opinion how far it should be communicated to Mr. Hammond; the President was pleased to call at the office of Th: J. and to decide in favor of a full communication, on the same day (between 2. & 3. o'clock he believes). Th: J. in considering the subject, found it would require caution of expression in both letters, that is, to Mr. Genet & Mr. Hammond. He took therefore to the next day to propose the draughts. The President called on him in the country the next morning (the 6th) and after his departure, Th: J. went on with the beginning of the letter to Gouver. Morris, which he had begun, and had read a part of to the President. He was therefore later than usual in going to town. When he arrived there he sent the two draughts of letters to Genet & Hammond for the President's approbation. Whether they did not come back to his office till he had left town, or whether they could not be copied in time, he does not recollect; but he finds the press copy of the letter to Mr. Genet, in Mr. Taylor's handwriting, dated Aug. 7.”

Philadelphia, August 7, 1793.

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Sir, —In a letter of June 5th, I had the honor to inform you, that the President, after reconsidering, at your request, the case of vessels armed within our ports to commit hostilities on nations at peace within the United States, had finally determined, that it could not be admitted, and desired that all those, which had been so armed, should depart from our ports. It being understood afterwards that these vessels either still remained in our ports, or had only left them to cruize on our coasts, and return again with their prizes, and that another vessel, the *Little Democrat*, had been since armed at Philadelphia, it was desired in my letter of the 12th of July, that such vessels, with their prizes, should be detained till a determination should be had of what was to be done under these circumstances. In disregard, however, of this desire, the *Little Democrat* went out immediately on a cruize.

I have it now in charge to inform you, that the President considers the United States bound, pursuant to positive assurance, given in conformity to the laws of neutrality, to effectuate the restoration of, or to make compensation for, prizes which shall have been made, of any of the parties at war with France, subsequent to the 5th day of July last, by privateers fitted out of our ports.

That it is consequently expected, that you will cause restitution to be made of all prizes taken and brought into our ports, subsequent to the above mentioned day, by such privateers; in defect of which, the President considers it as incumbent upon the United States to indemnify the owners of those prizes. The indemnification to be reimbursed by the French nation.

That, besides taking efficacious measures to prevent the future fitting out privateers in the ports in the United States, they will not give asylum therein to any which shall have been at any time so fitted out, and will cause restitution of all such prizes as shall be hereafter brought within our ports, by any of the said privateers.

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It would have been but proper respect to the authority of the country, had that been consulted before these armaments were undertaken. It would have been satisfactory, however, if their sense of them, when declared, had been duly acquiesced in. Reparation of the injury, to which the United States have been made so involuntarily instrumental, is all which now remains, and in this your compliance cannot but be expected.

In consequence of the information given in your letter of the 4th instant that certain citizens of St. Domingo, lately arrived in the United States, were associating for the purpose of undertaking a military expedition, from the territory of the United States, against that island, the Governor of Maryland, within which state the expedition is understood to be preparing, is instructed to take effectual measures to prevent the same.